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FM SECSTATE WASHDC  
TO RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 2693  
RUEHCN/AMCONSUL CHENGDU 4507  
RUEHGZ/AMCONSUL GUANGZHOU 1267  
RUEHGH/AMCONSUL SHANGHAI 4496  
RUEHSH/AMCONSUL SHENYANG 8993  
INFO RUEHROV/AMEMBASSY VATICAN 1287

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NOFORN  
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TAGS: [PINR](#) [KIRF](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [CH](#) [VT](#)  
SUBJECT: (C) CHINA: RELATIONS WITH THE VATICAN  
(C-AL9-02596)

REF: A. BEIJING 003059  
[1](#)B. BEIJING 003073  
[1](#)C. GUANGZHOU 000647  
[1](#)D. SHANGHAI 000462

Classified By: ELISSA G. PITTERLE, DIRECTOR, INR/OPS

[1](#)1. (S/NF) WASHINGTON ANALYSTS GREATLY APPRECIATE REFTELS FOR PROVIDING INFORMATION ON THE COMPLEXITIES OF BEIJING'S RELATIONSHIP WITH CHRISTIAN RELIGIONS, AS WELL AS CHINESE SOCIETY'S EVOLVING RELATIONSHIP WITH RELIGION. REFTELS PROVIDE GROUND TRUTH ON THE STATUS OF CHINA'S RELIGIOUS PRACTITIONERS AND RELIGIOUS FREEDOM, AND WE WOULD HAVE LITTLE VALUE ADDED IN OUR FINISHED PRODUCTS WITHOUT POSTS' INSIGHTS. WE STILL LACK INFORMATION, HOWEVER, ON CHINESE LEADERSHIP'S STRATEGIC THINKING TOWARD RELATIONS WITH THE VATICAN AND POLICIES REGARDING CATHOLIC AND PROTESTANT POPULATIONS IN CHINA. THIS IS OF PARTICULAR INTEREST BECAUSE A POSSIBLE REESTABLISHMENT OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH THE HOLY SEE COULD INDICATE A RADICAL SHIFT IN BEIJING'S PERCEPTIONS OF THREATS TO THE COMMUNIST PARTY'S POWER AND RULE. SUCH A SHIFT COULD SIGNAL MORE LIBERAL LEADERSHIP THINKING IN OTHER AREAS WHERE THE PARTY HAS TYPICALLY MAINTAINED TIGHT CONTROL. LEADERSHIP VIEWS ON VARIOUS RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS LIKE THE HOUSE CHURCH MOVEMENT ARE ALSO OF PARTICULAR INTEREST, AS WELL AS ANY FURTHER INSIGHT INTO WHETHER BEIJING COULD BE PLANNING A DIPLOMATIC SHIFT THAT WOULD MAKE IT EASIER TO FREELY PRACTICE A RELIGION IN CHINA. AS TIME AND RESOURCES PERMIT, WE WOULD WELCOME ADDITIONAL INSIGHT ON THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS. MANY THANKS AND WARM REGARDS.

[1](#)A. (S/REL TO USA, AUS, CAN, GBR, NZL) IN WHAT WAYS, IF ANY, IS CHINA LOOKING TO CHANGE ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH THE VATICAN? WHAT WOULD MAKE CHINA AGREE TO THE REESTABLISHMENT OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH THE VATICAN, AND WHAT IS THE TIMEFRAME WITHIN WHICH BEIJING WANTS TO ACCOMPLISH THAT OBJECTIVE?

[1](#)B. (S/REL TO USA, AUS, CAN, GBR, NZL) HOW DOES BEIJING FEEL ABOUT A RECONCILIATION BETWEEN THE OPEN AND UNDERGROUND CATHOLIC CHURCH? WOULD LEADERS ACCEPT INCREASED COOPERATION BETWEEN THE TWO GROUPS EVEN IF RELATIONS WITH THE VATICAN HAVE NOT BEEN ESTABLISHED?

[1](#)C. (S/REL TO USA, AUS, CAN, GBR, NZL) HOW DO LEADERS VIEW THE HOUSE CHURCH MOVEMENT IN CHINA? WHAT GUIDELINES, IF ANY, HAVE CENTRAL LEADERS ISSUED TO LOCAL OFFICIALS THAT DETAIL THE SORT OF HOUSE CHURCH WORSHIP THAT IS PERMITTED?

[1](#)D. (S/REL TO USA, AUS, CAN, GBR, NZL) WHY IS BEIJING NOW ALLOWING SHOUWANG HOUSE CHURCH TO CONTINUE WORSHIPPING TOGETHER AFTER TRYING TO SHUT THE CHURCH DOWN IN EARLY NOVEMBER? WHY DID BEIJING INITIALLY TARGET SHOUWANG CHURCH FOR CLOSURE?

1E. (S/REL TO USA, AUS, CAN, GBR, NZL) WHY WAS THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF CATHOLIC REPRESENTATIVES (NACR) POSTPONED? WHO INITIALLY PROPOSED THE POSTPONEMENT AT THE MEETING IN BEIJING ON THE 25TH? WAS THE NACR POSTPONEMENT APPROVED AT THE CENTRAL LEVEL AND IF SO, BY WHOM AND WHY? WHEN WILL IT BE RESCHEDULED?

1F. (S/REL TO USA, AUS, CAN, GBR, NZL) WHO IS LIKELY TO BE NAMED PRESIDENT OF THE CHINESE CATHOLIC PATRIOTIC ASSOCIATION AND THE BISHOP'S CONFERENCE OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN CHINA?

1G. (S/REL TO USA, AUS, CAN, GBR, NZL) WHAT RELATIONSHIP DOES NEW STATE ADMINISTRATION OF RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS DIRECTOR WANG ZUO'AN HAVE WITH TOP LEADERS?

12. (U) PLEASE CITE C-AL9-02596 IN THE SUBJECT LINE OF REPORTING IN RESPONSE TO THE ABOVE QUESTIONS.  
CLINTON